

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Southern Motion Furniture

#### Mississippi Technology Alliance

#### Southern Motion Furniture Increases Competitive Edge

**Client Profile:**

Southern Motion Furniture, Inc, established in 1996, is a furniture manufacturer based in Pontotoc, Mississippi. The company currently employs 300 people.

**Situation:**

Southern Motion faces competition from both domestic and international companies. The key to Southern Motion's success is to focus on being a low cost producer and to ship on time. Southern Motion uses the cell approach for production. Each cell represents approximately 50 employees. Quality Development training is vital to their existence. Having a reputation as a trend setter in motion upholstery mandated that Southern Motion spend a significant amount of time training their employees. The company called upon the Mississippi Technology Alliance (MEP.ms), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to provide assistance in the training process.

**Solution:**

MEP.ms at Itawamba Community College (ICC) provided Quality Development training for company employees, which began with the Quality Audit Inspection. Supervisors and management check every style and every cell's production several times per week. From these inspections, training was conducted up and down the cell to correct the process deficiency. Cell managers train and re-train cell employees on finding and fixing production defect and how this affects downstream processes. Training can take the form of discussions and observation, demonstration and observation and team problem solving. Quality Development training also includes intra-process cross training. For example, the individuals in the sewing section of the cell are cross-trained to perform the sewing operations before and after their own process and, at times, other sewing operations. Continuous monitoring and thorough immediate addressing of quality defects within every cell and across the multiple styles is a key operational success factor for Southern Motion. The support and help from the MEP.ms Center at ICC and the State workforce funding enabled Southern Motion to focus its time and effort toward this necessary training. Mississippi State Workforce funding allowed Southern Motion to remain competitive without taking shortcuts to keep costs in line. As a result of the workforce training received from MEP.ms, Southern Motion is now doing business on the West Coast and is in the process of producing internationally. The expansion of Southern Motion will create a minimum of 200 new jobs with the potential to create 400 jobs, over the next five years.

**Results:**

- \* Increased sales by \$25 million.
- \* Realized \$1.3 million in cost savings.
- \* Investment savings of \$374,400.

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\* Increased productivity by 36 percent.

**Testimonial:**

"We value the MEP.ms Center at Itawamba Community College and their resources and consider them a partner in our success."

Danny McClellan, Vice President of Operations